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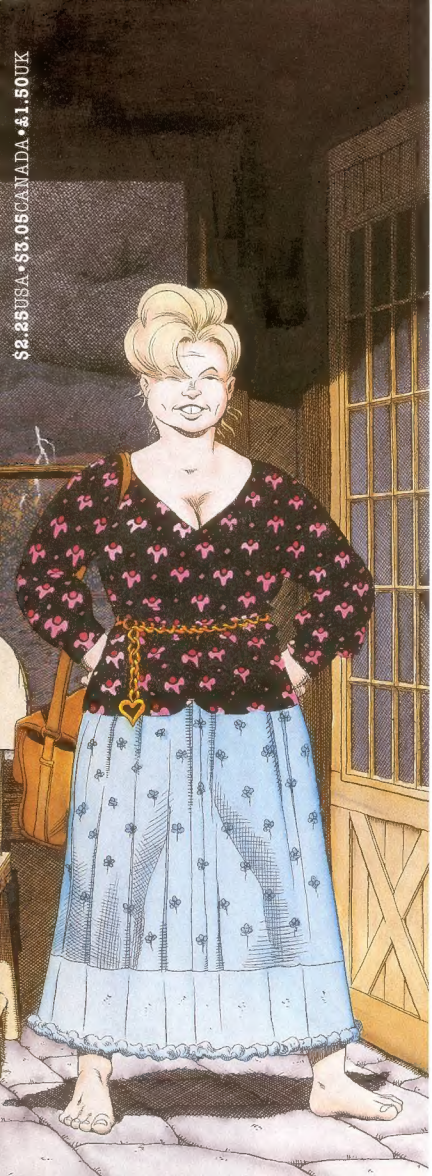

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CEREBUS GUYS

no.13

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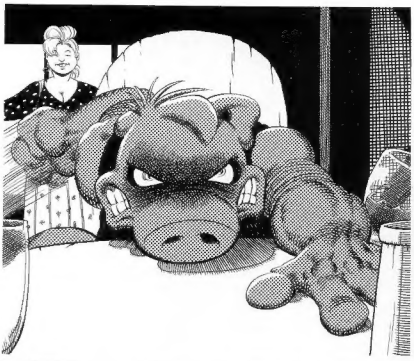

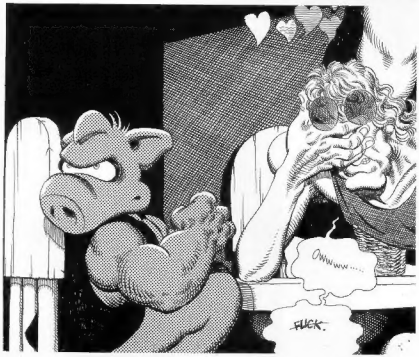

CEREBUS

NO. 213 DECEMBER 1996

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DIANA SCHUTZ
Proofreading

GUYS
a novel
•
(Cerebus 201 to Cerebus 219)

MONTHLY

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AHHHH...
SHIT.
MMMMM...
YESS.
HA
PUT. ME. DOWN Y'BIG GOOF!
YER MESSIN' UP MY HAY-UR!
SVRRY!
SORRY.
I'M JUST SO...
I MEAN YOU'RE SO
SO

I KNOW
WELL!
THIS PLACE HASN'T CHANGED MUCH.
IT'S STILL A FUCKING TOILET
HAHAHA
HAA HA
HAHAHAHA
HAHAHAHA
HAHAHAHA
OH, POOH BEAR.
HOW I'VE MISSED YOUR SENSE OF HUMOUR
JEEZ... SOME PATHETIC COOL SCHOOL LOSERS 'N' EVERYTHING!

HIII, HENDERSON!
'ALLO, ZIG.
HIIII, SERBIUS!
HEY, ZIG.
HIIII, MÄRK!
'ALLO, ZIG.
MISSED YOUR SENSE OF HUMOUR
OH, POOH BEAR...
OH, POOH BEAR...
MISSED YOUR SEN
OH! POOH!
WELL?! ARENCHA GONNA OFFER ME A DRINK?!
YES! I'M SÖRRY!
RIGHT AWAY! I'M SÖRRY!
HENDERSON!

I WANT TWO WATTAYACALL GLASSES OF YER BEST WHITE WINE...
AN' I WANT E
RED.WINE.
RED... RED?
BUT I WUZ WATTAYACALL SURE... THAT IS, I THOUGHT YOU ALWAYS
I WATTAYACALL COULDJA WATTAYACALL SWORE
THAT
IT
USUALLY I ONLY DRINK WHITE WINE
BUT!...
I JUST DECIDED TO CHANGE MY MIND!
HAHAHA HAHAHA HAHAHA
HAHAHAH

HAHAHA
HAHAHA
HAHAHA

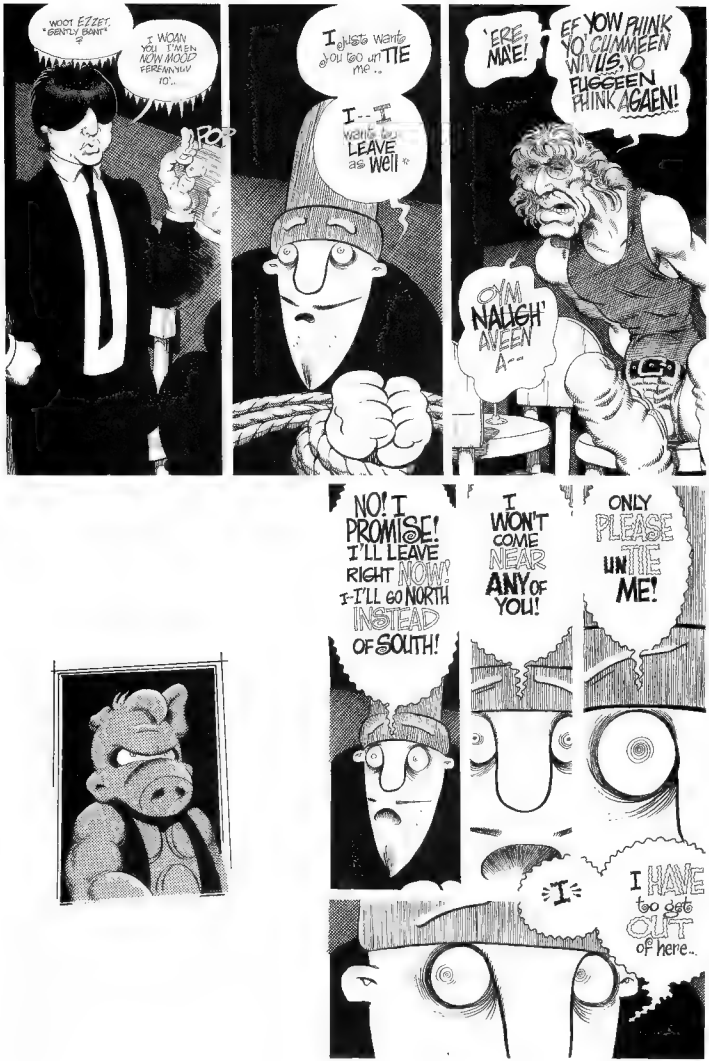
SAY!
THIS IS WATTAYACALL REALLY
BLECH!
BLECH!
THIS IS TH' WORST RED WINE I EVER DRUNK!
YEAH, HENDERSON! WHUDDAY'TRYNA DO?!
POISON US?!
YOU BETTER GET SOME...

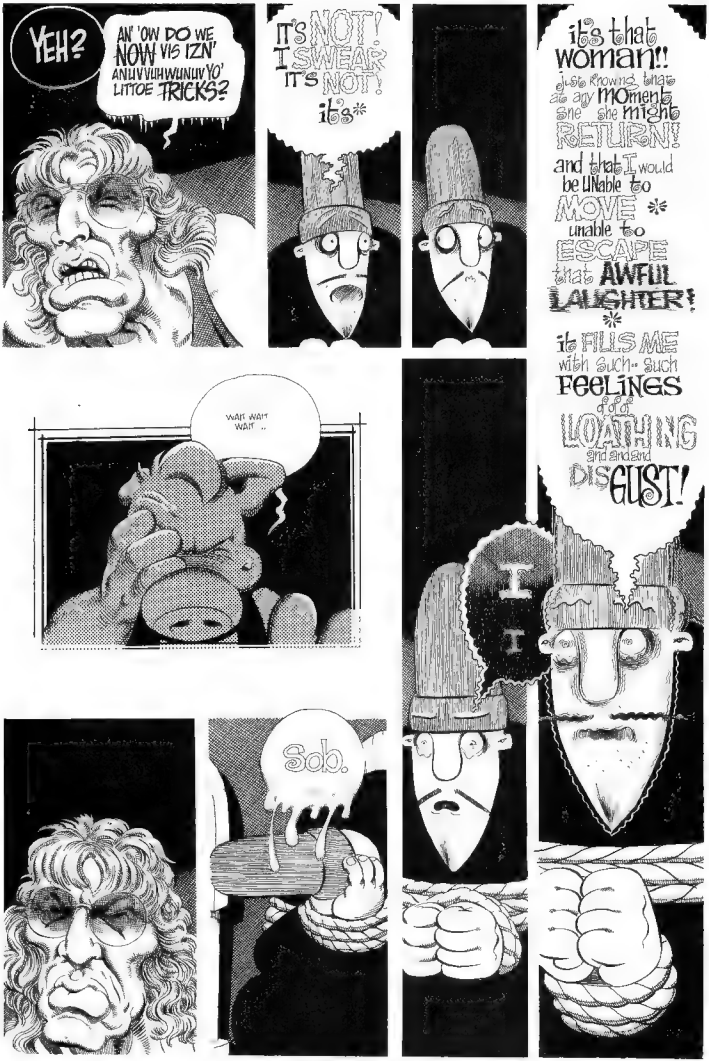
I HAVE A REALLY GOOD BOTTLE OF RED WINE IN MY BAG... WHY DON'T WE DRINK IT INSTEAD.
UPSTAIRS.
'BYE HENDERSON!
'BYE SERGILLS!
'BYE MARK!

VAT FUGGEEN CUNT'S LOPHTIH COULD STOP A RAMPAGEEN BULL IN 'IZ TRACKS.
I'VE NOWTIGHT THET SOOM WEMMEN MALLOW WEITH AGE...
...AN' SOOM WEMMEN RIPEN WEITH AGE.
BOOT NAUGHT AWLD ZIGGY...
ZIGGY JOOST GITS... ZIGGYUH.
WEWW...

"NOW USE CROYIN' OWUH AMPYOOTATED TESTYCOES" (AZ OWLD KING CALD YONSTA SAY.)
TROOF BE NOWN OYNE JUS' BEEN LOOKEEN FOR AN EXKYOWSE TO 'EAD BECK DOWN SOUTH
Y RECKON ET'S LIKE A SIGN FROOM 'IM THAN?
SUMFINK LOIK VAT
AYE
WHAAT?
YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE JUST BECAUSE THAT...
...THAT...
KLIK KLAK
'ERE! 'ARRISON! MICK!
SOOMWOON JOOST TOWLD ME THEY SAWR ZIGPIG 'EADED THESS WAY!
WE'VE GOLTA FIND BEAH AN' BASH 'IM WOON!
THAN STECK 'IM ENTH' LAHDUH AN' LOCK ET BEFO'E

BEFO'S
AHHH
FOOK
AAAHH
SHET
AAAHH
PESO
'R WE OLE 'EADED SOUTH THANG
AYE
YEH
NOW WAITA MINNIT!
CERBERUS CAN'T BELIEVE THAT YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW
MMM!
M


WOOT EZZET. "GENTLY BONT"
I WOAN YOU T'MEN NOW MOOD? FERRANNUV IO'..
POP
I just want to TTE me...
I--I want to LEAVE as well
'ERE MA'E!
EF YOW PHINK YO' CUMMEEN WIVUS, YO FUGGEEN PHINK AGAEN!
O'M NAUGH' AVEEN A--
NO! I PROMISE! I'LL LEAVE RIGHT NOW! I-I'LL GO NORTH INSTEAD OF SOUTH!
I WON'T COME NEAR ANY OF YOU!
ONLY PLEASE UNTIE ME!
I
I HAVE to get OUT of here..

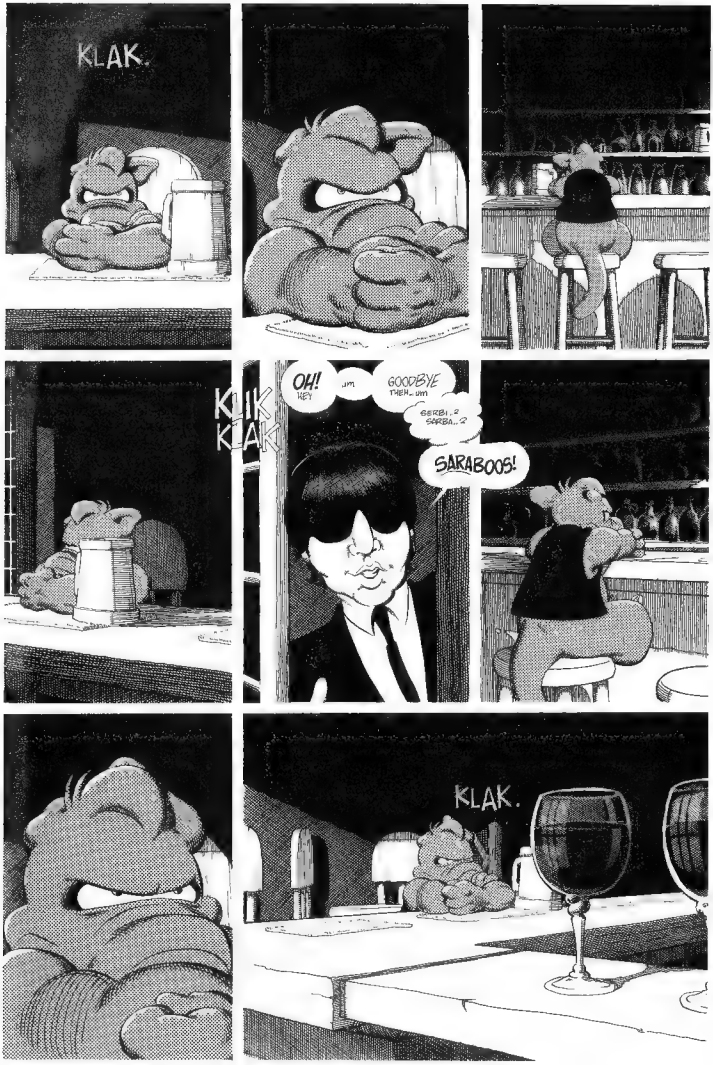

YEH?
AN 'OW DO WE NOW VIS IZN' ANUV VUH WUNUV YO' LITTOE TRICKS?
IT'S NOT! I SWEAR IT'S NOT! it's*
it's that woman!!
she knows that at any moment she might RETURN!
and that I would be UNable to MOVE
unable to ESCAPE that AWFUL LAUGHTER!
it FILLS ME with such such FEELINGS of LOATHING and and DISGUST!
WAIT WAIT WAIT...
I
I
UP
Sob.

YEH AWROIGHT
..ADDYM GOIN
thanks you
SOB
thank you
If there's ANYthing I can do to · · · to REPAY you · · ANYTHING at all
No matter HOW deGRADing
. or .
HuMiLiATinG
'ARK.
OY-PHINK-OY-'EAR-ZIG-PIG-BESTUREEN-'ERSALF
AN'.
'EADEEN'.
VIS.
WHY.
KLIK KLAK

ROIGH'-- RICHIE'S GOWEN T'TELL SNATCHLIH YOW YOW'RE PACKEEN' I' IN -- OYM GOWEN T'IH' CLOWNING UT. T'EET YOU BOWF SOME RAGTUHLUH CLOWNES...
YEN- ARPTUH YO' DUNN. Y'SHEFT-- WE WIN OLE MEET A' TH' STAH CHI-ODE F'DRENKS,
DIVO-DE UP WHA'EVAH SAY'RENCE GROW-SREEZ Y BE',
AN' EAD SOUPH STRAIGH'-AWHY.
AYE...
CHECK.

NOW
'AVE WE F'GOTTEN ENNYFEEN'?
UH-- NOW?
NOW, UH THENK THAT BOUT CUHLIMZ BT
ROIGH' YEN-- WE'WN SEE YOW AT TH' STAH-CHI-ODE ROIGH AFTUH SUNDOWN
AYE!
CHEE'Z
TA-TA
SEE YOU THAN, AYE?
KLIK KLAK.
KLAK.

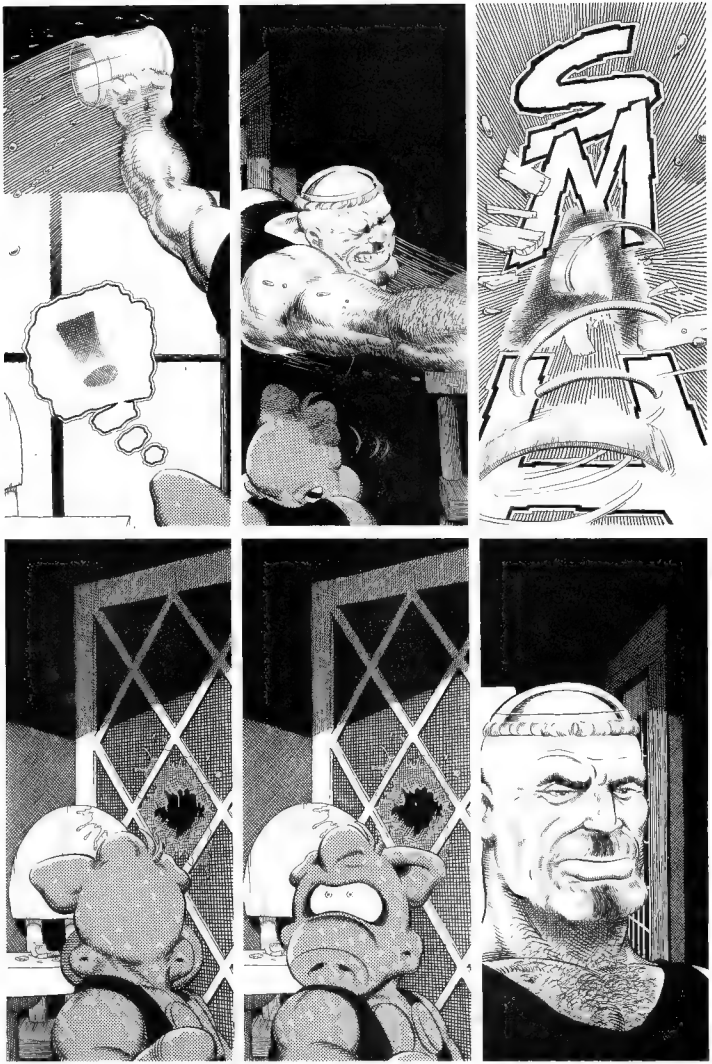
KLIK
KLAK


KLAK.
KLIK KLAK
OH! HEY
um
GOODBYE THEN... um
SARBA...? SARBA...?
SARABOOS!
KLAK.

KLIK
SLAMK
SNK
GOOOOOD MORNING, CEREBUS, OL' PAL!
AND WHAT A BEE-YOOT EE-FUL
SO WHEN ARE YOU LEAVING?

SKITCH SKTCH
ZIG'S OVER AT HER SISTER'S PLACE WATTAVACA.. PICKING UP A FEW THINGS.
I'M WATTAVACA.. MEETING HER OVER THERE
AN THEN WE'RE WATTAVACA..
HEADIN DOWN SOUTH
ANY
I JUST CAME IN TO WATTAVACA.. SAY--

IT WILL BE A REAL GREAT TA WATTYACHA I KNOW?
" NEVER WORKS OUT WITH YOU AND ZIG
JUST LIKE IT NEVER WORKS OUT WITH CEREBUS AND JAKA
CEREBUS FINALLY REALIZED THAT HE WAS WASTING HIS LIFE EITHER WAITING FOR JAKA TO COME BACK, OR TRYING TO MAKE IT WORK WHEN SHE DID COME BACK.
CEREBUS FIGURES
SOME DAY YOU'LL FIGURE OUT THAT IT'S THE SAME WITH YOU AND ZIG.
IT WASN'T EASY. SHIT, IT WAS AS IF CEREBUS HAD TO ADMIT TO HIMSELF THAT HE HAD ALREADY WASTED MOST OF HIS
!


SM

part one

COMICS AND THE MASS MEDIUM

It occurs to me — as I surf around the fifty some-odd television channels I get — that television is an infernal device. Literally. Lucifer Morningstar, the Light-Bringer, Satan. Television is, after all is said and done, a little box of coloured lights with sound. Expressed a little differently, television is the sun and movies are the moon — television being a light source and movies being images that reflect a light source (the projector) from a separate surface. Right now I'm in the middle of reading *Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Stories,* Herman Melville's last work. It's not exactly tough sledding, apart from the occasional word with which I'm unfamiliar or 19th-century concepts and expressions no longer widely used. It's a very rewarding book. The closer I pay attention to what I'm reading, the more I get out of it — particularly with a writer like Melville. Many layers of meaning which can be interpreted many different ways. Still, I find myself drawn back to the television set.

I watch it, primarily, with the sound off. It takes a great deal, these days, for me to push the mute button to determine what is going on apart from the visuals. "Visuals." What a degraded, television-age term. The pictures, the images. All of television is degrading. I find the act of watching television to be degrading. Channel-surfing seems to me to be an act of small integrity — as if, by refusing to watch less than a second here and a few seconds there of Lucifer's Guided Tour of the various circles of his realm, I am somehow keeping my addiction to the sordid goings-on at a slight remove from myself. The Importance of Being Earnest is what the Light-Bringer is trafficking in these days to an unconscionable degree. Everyone on television is in deadly earnest. Their expressions are earnestly happy, earnestly concerned, earnestly saddened, earnestly outraged. They're not, of course. They are just earnestly whatever-they-are-being-paid-to-be-earnest-about — or earnest about whatever got them into Lucifer's Realm in the first place if they're "real" people who are just visiting. I have yet to listen to any part of an episode of *Jerry Springer* — the one who has taken the Donahue/Winfrey formula and stripped it down to its purest essence — but I have watched a great deal of it. Everyone is earnest on *Jerry Springer.* Jerry Springer is, the audience members are, the hysterical-verging-on-homicidal victim/objects are. Even with the sound off (perhaps *particularly* with the sound off) the "game" is given away at least three or four times in each fifteen- minute segment. In the midst of snarling, snapping, weeping, and raging, the victim/objects will smirk self-consciously. Clearly — to them — the point is not what is being discussed. The point is not what a shambles their lives are or the crisis that has brought them to their ruinous and degraded state. No, the point is that their ruinous and degraded state has bought them temporary entrée into Lucifer's Realm, a Realm which, hitherto, they had only been able to watch like starving urchins with their noses pressed against the bakery shop window. And, clearly, they consider their temporary entry visa to be quite an achievement. Quite an achievement. They are scarcely able to contain their joy at this achievement, and three or four times per fifteen-minute segment they are unable to do so. It is in these moments that the façade of what television portrays itself to be — as opposed to what television is, has been, and always will be — develops wide cracks. The mask of portrayal slips, and the face of television's reality becomes plainly apparent. And the Light-Bringer trembles apprehensively upon his dark throne.

Rick Veitch, who does not own a television set (blessed and benighted individualist that he is), mentioned to me that the last time he had occasion to watch Lucifer's Realm in all its inglorious glory, he was struck by the extensive use of print on television as compared to his last visit. He's exactly right. Since nothing is being discussed on Jerry Springer's program, it becomes necessary to print an encapsulation of the "topic" in the lower left corner of the screen — "She Thinks She's So Hot" or "My Daughter-in-Law is a Slut" — the combination of the printed provocation and the depicted verbal mayhem, one supposes, being sufficient to compel the average channel-surfer to pause and hit his or her mute button. Commercials use printed messages even more extensively (having given up the ghost that we surfers can be compelled to hit our mute buttons lest we miss the lies being mouthed at each other by actors and actresses during a commercial interruption). Fifty

years into television's short history, comic books have thus won a philosophical point: words and pictures together are inherently more compelling than sound and pictures together where there is a lack or a nearly total absence of meaningful content. More on this in subsequent installments.

Now, to be fair to the Prince of Lies, Old Nick, to give the Devil his due, there was a time when television was necessary. Television was necessary during the fight for civil rights in the American South. Without the televised pictures of civil rights marchers being attacked by police dogs and assaulted with jets of water from pressurized hoses, it is doubtful that civil rights would have come as far as they did as fast as they did. But, beyond this and a handful of examples — and viewed in the context of television's complete failure as a medium of communication (again, more on this in later installments) — television (daily and nightly) makes an unpersuasive case for itself.

There is a wonderful book Steve Bissette gave me called *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*. It's the most wonderful, pointless book I've ever read. Pointless, because you could no more eliminate television than you could eliminate prostitution, gambling, recreational drugs, or any other powerful human addiction. I would contend that television is the worst of the human addictions for these reasons: a) its addiction base is nearly universal and b) it is consequently not perceived as an addiction by those addicted to it. Everyone watches television, ergo television is not addictive. It's just something that everyone does. It's not only something everyone does, it's something everyone does and lies about. "Social" drinkers hate to be reminded of that six-hour binge last Sunday (hey, that was football — and, oh yeah, *60 Minutes*, but *60 Minutes* is educational. I learned all about that whatsisname guy in the Middle East and that wattayacall organization of his and I forget what the other two segments were about, but they were educational too. Oh, wait — one was on Madonna, but it was still interesting). Yes, but you said that you only watch four or five hours a week (I DON'T WATCH AS MUCH TELEVISION AS SOME PEOPLE). What are you getting so angry about? Often a newspaper columnist of one kind or another will share with us the ordeal of how he or she and his or her family went without television for two weeks or a month or three months. Usually on a bet or to prove a point. The withdrawal symptoms are described graphically as are illicit visits to neighbours or friends to get a "fix." The article concludes with platitudinous observations about the improved family relations that were experienced, the diversity of interests pursued, etc., etc., even as the closing paragraph metaphorically presents the family decamped in the living room wrapping elastic bands around their biceps, plumping up their veins, and reaching for the cooking spoon and the matches and the syringe.

Picture the collective reaction if you substitute "prostitution" or "gambling" or "recreational drugs" in the above: "How My Family Gave Up Crack Cocaine For a Month" by Betty Hausfrau (Betty Hausfrau's columns appear Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in the Gazette).

All protest against the analogy makes me snicker, you know? I mean, I am an addict. I'm a cigarette smoker. I'm a drinker. I know all of the rationalizations an addict uses; I know the paralogic inside and out. It's not hurting me (perhaps not, but is it doing you any good?), I work hard, I'm entitled to a few little vices (when did vice become an entitlement?), I enjoy it, all right? (isn't there a world full of *better* things to enjoy?), I DON'T WATCH AS MUCH TELEVISION AS SOME PEOPLE (what are you getting so angry about?).

Anyway, this is just preamble to my initial point — the foundation for this series of essays:

There is only one mass medium: television. Beside it, newspapers, novels, comic books, movies, etc., etc. are of a size comparable to…oh…Cold Cut Distributors as compared to Diamond Comic Distributors, various breeds of housepets — big dogs and small dogs — standing around an elephant, tax revenues in any industrialized country placed next to that country's accumulated deficit (deficits — talk about coloured lights and sound).

People in the comic-book field who are obsessed with making comic books more acceptable to The Mass Audience, to me, are overlooking the only salient fact which applies to the discussion. The Mass Audience has found its drug of choice. They're all mainlining heroin (WE're all mainlining heroin), and we — comic-book people — wonder why they — non-comic-book people — don't want any of this ginseng tea we're offering. It gives you a pleasant, mild euphoria, and we drink a LOT of it over here. What's wrong with everyone else (we ask ourselves, hunkered down in our living rooms, tying off our Biceps with an elastic band, plumping up our veins, etc., etc.)?

Television Rules!

What do most people watch on television? They watch the television that everyone else watches: the Most Popular Show on Television as the Purest Expression of Democracy in Action. Is it *Seinfeld* or *ER*? *Roseanne* or *Friends*? It used to be hard to tell, but now you can just watch *Entertainment Tonight* or the *Hollywood Minute* on CNN. We're such total junkies we've gotten really curious about how and where they make the stuff. We're even interested in what the people who make the stuff do when they're not making the stuff. Answer? They're shooting up too! Wow, I wonder what stuff the guy that makes *my* favourite stuff shoots up when *he* shoots up! What's Jerry Seinfeld's favourite TV show? I read in the paper that he's going to answer the question on *20/20* tonight. That's on at 9, isn't it?

Entertainment Tonight, the *Hollywood Minute*, *20/20*, and suchlike bring the insurmountable problem into even sharper focus. The audience for a television show *about* television shows still dwarfs the audience for *anything* else by a very wide margin.

So, that is the foundation for this series of essays: television is the only mass medium. In part two, I'll explain why I've lumped movies in with comic books, novels, newspapers, etc. If there's space, I'll explain why rock'n'roll was a good rear-guard action which failed to stem television's overthrow of human awareness, before moving on to the actual relationship between comic books and The Mass Medium.

But first, why television — the sun — and movies — the moon — are reaching towards a "size" ratio comparable to their Solar System counterparts.

Part two: Calling Down the Moon.

aardvark comment

MOONEY ON MAILER

I can always count on Michael Mooney to come through just when I think that I'm only writing this stuff for myself. Made John Lennon's 56th birthday (and the 16th anniversary of Elvis and whatsername's divorce) a lot more gratifying than it might have been otherwise. So just to prove that television isn't COMPLETELY worthless:

Dear Dave,

OK, panic's over, you can start using Norman Kingsley again...There was a *South Bank Show* on Sunday, an hour-long interview of Mr. Mailer on the subject of his book on the young Picasso, so I've got the visual reference I lacked (impressive likeness, incidentally).

The *South Bank Show* is one of the last bastions of male light in television, especially on the commercial networks (I'm still holding out some hope for Radio 4. Despite recent attempts to "modernise" it, it still retains a high percentage of rationalism). An hour of two people talking to each other. Discussion. Explication of concept. Fun. The best piece of television I ever saw was the *South Bank* interview with Dennis Potter, filmed a few months before his death from cancer (he told us that he'd named the cancer Rupert, after Rupert Murdock). He alternated sips of chardonnay and opium, all the while outlining the writer's duty in our society. He was obviously in great pain, holding back death purely with his desire to complete his last work. He remained witty, urbane, and angry. Awesome and sobering.

Sorry, back to Mailer. He's a cantankerous old bastard, isn't he? I don't know if you've read the Picasso biography (I certainly haven't; it's only just been published here), but he said two things among many that stood out for me. Firstly, he claimed that Picasso was not a misogynist (which is almost received wisdom these days) but a man obsessed with the dualism of women. Many of his early paintings show women literally split between the comforting mother figure and a dark shadow. I certainly felt a challenge to my own rendering of women, and wonder if you've tried to represent the same thing. The danger of comics writing tends to be the easy drift towards characters as archetypes. I was put in mind of your dualistic representation of Cirin: the militaristic, matriarchal aardvark, and the calm, almost mystic woman under house arrest in the city. Astoria's awakening in *M&D* to her own mistakes also indicates a move towards dualism...You've come a long way from Red Sophia, boyo.

Secondly, Mailer makes great play of Picasso having invented Cubism as a response to Einsteinian physics. Not as an interpretation, mind you, but a response. Mailer's take is that it was pure creative jealousy. "What do you mean this guy's changing the way we look at the world? I've been doing that for years! Look, over here: 4 dimensions in 2! Ha, like to see him beat that!"

The interviewer asked why he laid such store by this insight.

"Ha!" said Mailer (really, Ha!), "because I'm the first one to think of it."

Almost fell out of my chair.

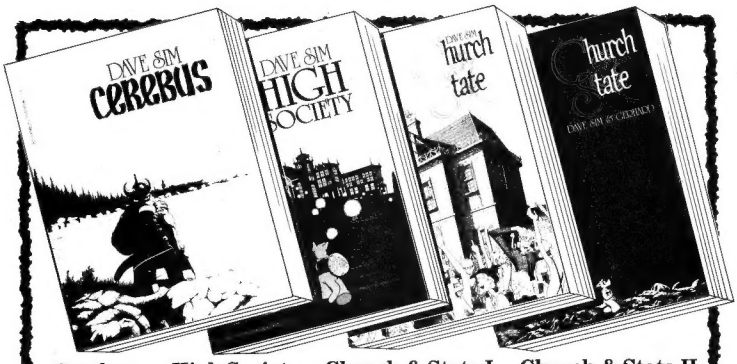
OK, I've got to go and take care of a deadline, so I'll leave this to throw you off schedule on yours. Nottingham looks like a probability, and I look forward to seeing you there.

Oh, yes, Dandy Don? Great fuckin' save? Two-handed job?

Fuckin' A, man. Fuckin' A.

Michael
26 Stokesley Grove
High Heaton
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE7 7AU

P.S. (Can't seem to break the habit, sorry.) The Thatch was defrosted and wheeled onto the stage of the Conservative Party conference yesterday, for the sole purpose of kissing John Major on stage. Something terrible symbolic about that, I suppose, Iscariot aside...



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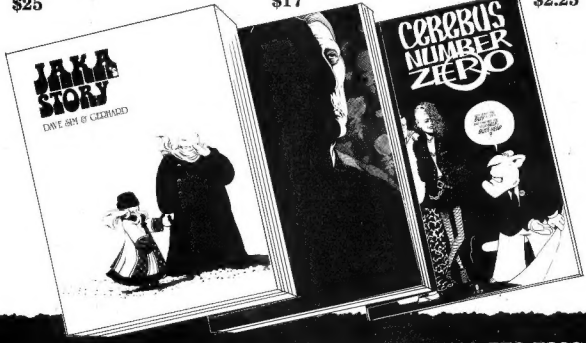

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While I blush with rapture at the thought of the well-lubricated Mr. Sim utilizing my voluptuous visage in order to satisfy his own personal and deep-seated creative urges...
...I feel compelled to expose my true self to you (the attractive and discriminating Cerebus reader) in an explicit yet entertaining manner!
Thusly, as your warm and genital host, I hope that you will (perhaps) allow me the satisfaction—via this display—of offering for sale the sordidly stimulating saga of Marc Hempel's turgid twosome, Tug & Buster...
...co-starring Me!!
(Just a suggestion!)
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YES! IT'S ACTUALLY FUNNY!
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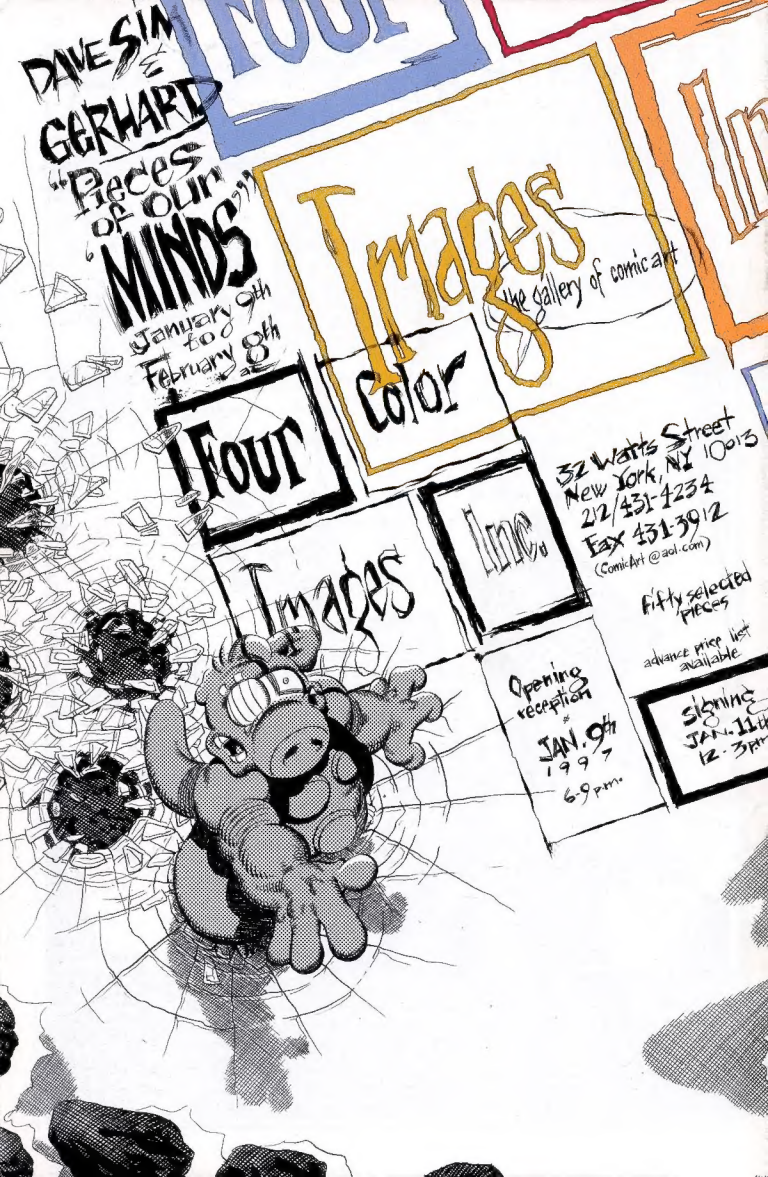
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